

What is claimed is:

1. A method of operating a proximity sensing unit for controlling an accessory device of a vehicle, said method comprising the steps of:

5 providing a plurality of proximity sensors disposed in a sequential pattern within a sensing unit said proximity sensors being responsive to a manual activation.

receiving at least two activation signals from at least two proximity sensors in response to said manual activation;

determining an activation sequence of said at least two activation signals;

10 selecting one of a plurality of control actions associated with said activation sequence; and

initiating said control action for controlling an operation of said accessory device.

15 2. The method of claim 1 wherein said activation sequence of said at least two proximity sensors correspond to a directional motion of said manual activation.

20 3. The method of claim 2 wherein said directional motion comprises a first directional motion that correlates to said one of said plurality of control actions for incrementing an operating parameter of said accessory device.

25 4. The method of claim 2 wherein said directional motion comprises a second direction dynamic motion that correlates to said one of said plurality of control actions for decrementing an operating parameter of said accessory device.

5. The method of claim 2 wherein at least one LED is illuminated in response to said manual activation.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein said control unit is a temperature control unit for controlling said accessory device.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein said control action comprises an adjustment command to increase a current temperature setting.

8. The method of claim 6 wherein said control action comprises an adjustment command to decrease a current temperature setting.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein said activation sequence comprises two proximity sensors activated simultaneously.

10. The method of claim 1 further comprising a step of illuminating at least one LED embedded within a surface of said proximity sensing unit for indicating said activation of at least one proximity sensor.

11. A vehicle accessory control sensing unit comprising:
a proximity sensing unit for encasing a plurality proximity sensors, said proximity sensors are internally disposed in a sequential pattern within said proximity sensing unit and are directed at a first wall of said proximity sensing unit, said plurality of proximity sensors capable of sensing a displacement of an object between at least two proximity sensors exterior to said first wall;
a plurality of LEDs embedded within said first wall, said plurality of LEDs each having an on state and an off state for identifying a respective temperature setting, said plurality of LEDs responsive to said plurality of proximity sensors detecting said displacement of said object exterior to said first wall; and
an accessory control circuit for receiving at least two activation signals from said at least two proximity sensors indicating said displacement of said object, said at least two activation signals indicative of a request to adjust a control

setting, said accessory control circuit including a controller for determining a activation sequence of said at least two proximity sensors and for determining a corresponding control action associated with said activation sequence.

5 12. The sensing unit of claim 11 wherein said proximity sensors comprise capacitance sensors.

 13. The sensing unit of claim 11 wherein said proximity sensors comprise piezo-electric sensors.

10 14. The sensing unit of claim 11 wherein said sequential pattern comprises an arcuate arrangement of said proximity sensors.

 15. The sensing unit of claim 11 wherein said sequential pattern
15 comprises a substantially inline arrangement of proximity sensors.

 16. The sensing unit of claim 11 wherein said sequential pattern comprises a serpentine arrangement of said proximity sensors.

20 17. The sensing unit of claim 11 further comprising a channel disposed on said first wall of said sensing unit, wherein said plurality of proximity sensors are aligned behind said channel, said channel guide functioning as a locator to guide said object along said plurality of proximity sensors.

25 18. The sensing unit of claim 11 wherein said sensing unit comprises a temperature control unit.

 19. The sensing unit of claim 18 wherein said control action comprising an adjustment command to increase a current temperature setting.

20. The sensing unit of claim 18 wherein said control action comprising an adjustment command to decrease a current temperature setting.